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Celebrating Labor Day By Executive Director Sean T. Casey



When we celebrate Labor Day weekend, most of us who are fortunate enough to have the day off will think of an opportunity for a family beach trip, serving up hamburgers and hotdogs with friends and neighbors, taking advantage of retail sales, and for me

personally, welcoming back college and NFL football.

While we all enjoy an extra break from our harried schedules – and the last thing I want to do is rain on your barbecue—it bears noting that the long weekend we celebrate at the beginning of September isn't exactly routed in the happiest of times for the American worker. The official establishment of Labor Day came during an era when working conditions were largely unregulated and labor strikes were the norm, sometimes turning to violence. The first Labor Day "parade" in the late 19th century didn't include floats or marching bands, but rather was made up of more than 10 thousand workers protesting labor conditions from New York's City Hall to Union Square.

Today, American and Georgian workers are incredibly fortunate, enjoying legal protections that keep us safe on the job and additional benefits that keep employers competitive, like paid vacations, health insurance, matched retirement contributions, holidays off, and corporate discounts. But in all things, there is always room for progress, and as we look ahead on the next chapter for the workforce, we have more opportunity than ever to create welcoming climates that encourage all kinds of diversity.

I oversee a state organization that helps individuals with disabilities obtain meaningful, competitive employment, and I see firsthand the value of a workforce that represents the whole community equitably to an unprecedented degree. Because newly implemented federal laws allow us to serve students as young as 14, some of our younger clients will know only professional opportunity, while their older peers recall the pangs of assumptions and workplace discrimination that at some point prevented them from achieving their potential or using their talents to the fullest. This Labor Day, I am reminded that our mission is guided by the premise that we must continually strive for expansion of opportunity for all.

That premise is the guiding principle on which Georgia's Employment First Act, which passed both chambers in the General Assembly and was signed by Governor Nathan Deal, is based. The new law established employment as the first and preferred option for people with disabilities who receive publically funded services and want to go to work. My coworkers and I at Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA) were proud to have a hand in its passage, and even prouder to live in a state where leaders who recognize the value of people with disabilities in the workforce voted 'yes'.

As we celebrate the entrepreneurial spirit of the American worker, we recognize the problem-solving nature of individuals who live with physical, emotional or cognitive challenges. The people we serve are finding their place in a world that isn't quite built to fit, and they still find creative ways to achieve what their non-disabled peers do, often as well or better. Hunger for success and relentless persistence are traits we can all hope to bring to our jobs as we emerge refreshed from a long weekend.



Get to Know a Legislator This Month We Feature Teri Anulewicz



Teri Anulewicz was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives in a special election in November 2017. She represents House District 42, which includes parts of Smyrna and Marietta, as well as areas in unincorporated Cobb County. Prior to her service in the Legislature, Teri spent a decade representing Ward 3 on the Smyrna City Council. She was first elected in 2007, and was elected to her third term in 2015. In 2016, she was appointed Mayor Pro Tem.

The firstborn in a family of six children, Teri was born in New Orleans and was raised in both New Orleans and in Houston. She moved to Georgia in 1994 and received her bachelor's degree in International Relations from Agnes Scott College in 1998. Her professional experience includes public affairs and government relations, with an emphasis on alliance development, coalition building and grassroots mobilization. Teri

lives with her husband, Chris, and their two children near the heart of downtown Smyrna.

In addition to representing Ward 3, Teri is involved with organizations including the Cobb Chamber of Commerce, the Girl Scouts of America and the Junior League of Atlanta. In 2008, she was named one of "20 Rising Stars Under 40" by Cobb Life Magazine, and in 2012, she was recognized as a Woman of Achievement by the YWCA of Northwest Georgia.

Teri's Affiliations

- * Georgia Municipal Association Legislative Policy Council
- * Cobb Chamber of Commerce Government Affairs Committee
- * Participated in the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' Legislative Fellows Program in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 2011
- * Past Treasurer of the Cobb Municipal Association
- * Sustaining member of the Junior League of Atlanta, past co-chair of the Political Affairs Committee
- * Past Chair of the Smyrna Area Council of the Cobb Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors
- * Past president of the MOMS Club of Smyrna-Northeast
- * Bible Study group leader at Holy Spirit Catholic Church
- * Troop leader for the Girl Scouts of America Recognitions
- * 2014-2015 Catholic Charities of Atlanta Leadership Class
- * 2012 YWCA of Northwest Georgia Women of Achievement Honoree
- * 2008 "20 Rising Stars Under 40" by Cobb Life magazine



There's a Way VR Client Passes on the Lessons She Learned

When Kennedy Cobble was 14, she was diagnosed with bone cancer. That same year—2006—her tailbone was removed, and a series of reconstructive surgeries soon followed. The treatments were a success until they weren't, remission followed by reemergence of the disease followed by treatment followed by remission. On the whole, she would be diagnosed and beat cancer four separate times, the disease and the treatments ultimately leaving her partially paralyzed in both of her feet. She spent her early high school years in and out of hospitals and in physical therapy learning how to walk again.

Because she couldn't attend school, school came to her, teachers huddled by her hospital bed going through the day's lessons. Their efforts to help her keep up with her classmates didn't go unnoticed. Instead, they would prove to shape much of what came next.

In August of 2018, 12 years after her initial diagnosis, Kennedy welcomed her first students to her classroom at Cedar Hill Elementary School. Several months before that, she graduated from the University of North Georgia with a degree in education. Neither of these things would've happened had she not first seen the dedication of the educators in her life, she said, their kindness and passion pushing her to follow their path.

"They gave me a lot of support and help and were there for me. They made me realize I could do that as well and help other students that way," Kennedy said. "I love kids, and I love how honest they are and how sweet they can be. But it was my teachers who inspired me to go into education." It wasn't as easy as deciding to become a teacher and then doing it, though. While Kennedy did eventually learn to walk again, the lingering medical complications from her treatments and the disease itself prevented her from driving. For years, she relied on friends and family to take her where she needed to go, and while she appreciated their generosity, it was limiting, she said.

"I felt very trapped," she said. "It was hard. I felt very guilty having to rely on them so much."

It was during this time that she first learned about GVRA, and working with her counselor, she discovered that by using hand controls, she would be able to drive again. GVRA purchased her the necessary equipment to make this a reality. This was a turning point, she said, an opportunity to live independently.

"I know it definitely boosted my confidence and made me feel free. I finally felt like an adult. I didn't have to rely on my little sister to take me places. I finally felt free and felt that I could do what I want and go where I want. The sense of freedom was incredible."

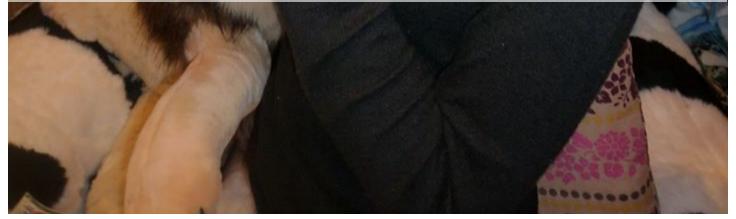
In the end, she said, it was one of many obstacles she needed to overcome in her life. After everything that has happened to her, she's pretty good at overcoming obstacles, and this is a lesson she's definitely going to pass on.

"Perseverance has become my motto, and it's definitely something I'm going to put in my kids' heads," Kennedy said. "You work hard and keep going, and you are going to succeed."





VR Client Kennedy Cobble overcame cancer—and additional hardship—to become an elementary school teacher. She began teaching this year.



Congratulations! The DAS Employee of the Month

Nomination By James Hay

It is my pleasure to nominate Ms. LaBritney Jones (pictured below) for Disability Adjudication Service's Employee of the Month. She is an adjudicator in unit 44.

During the last few months, she has demonstrated exceptional teamwork and cooperation in our unit. On her own initiative, during a recent period of transition, she assisted our unit by mailing letters. She also assisted her colleagues by making follow up calls.

When a colleague was recently on leave, she completed substantially more coverage work than was required. She developed additional cases and completed additional determinations resulting in several decisions for the claimants being served by the staff member on leave. During this time, she has delivered outstanding results on her own work, exceeding production, reducing her caseload and reducing her processing time.



And Further Congratulations!

Written by DAS Director Rita McWhorter

Please join me in congratulating our very own Cathy Chafin, Supervisor II, on her 2018 Commissioner's Honor Award from the Social Security Administration (SSA).

Cathy received a Commissioner's Citation for

promoting teamwork, building morale, and providing outstanding leadership in the Savannah DAS Branch Office.

Congratulations, Cathy!



It's Good to Be King Students Tour Kings Hawaiian



White County High School students recently participated in work study and training at the Kings



Say Cheese! VR Client in National Restaurant Ad

By Communications Specialist Tom Connelly

Albany and the surrounding area have had a hand in producing some very noteworthy individuals in the political world. Among them are Governor George Busby, Lt. Gov. Mark Taylor, both from Albany, and of course former governor, and 39th President of the United States, Jimmy Carter from Plains.

Almost 40 years after his time in the Oval Office at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., the former president invariably draws an overflowing crowd when he teaches Sunday school at Maranatha Baptist Church in this small southwest Georgia town.

Regarding entertainment, The Good Life City is the birthplace of Ray Charles. This incredible figure, who became totally blind by the age of 7, was a musical megastar. Feted by the likes of Frank Sinatra and Billy Joel, there's a statue of him in front of the downtown Hilton. Albany also was the home of Ray Stevens during some of his teenage years.

And now, and in another film-related area, one Albanian—and VR client—just might have taken her first step towards a film career. Everyone has to start somewhere, right?

Latesha Vicks is featured in videos that are to be shown nationally for Cheddars Scratch Kitchen. They are employees at the Cheddars restaurant in Albany.

Ms. Vicks, a person who was a client of Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency since early in her life, graduated from the Georgia School for the Deaf in Cave Springs in 2001 and Coosa Valley Tech College in Rome in 2004.

Following her graduation from this latter academic institution, she journeyed back to Albany in hopes of securing employment in the town of her youth. However, since she experienced difficulties in this endeavor, she again received assistance from GVRA.

After being armed by the agency with services such as Community Work Adjustment Training (a 3-month program that provides clients with onthe-job training in the community), Georgia Interpreting Services Network assistance, Job Coaching and Transportation-bus passes, Latesha was placed at Cheddars.

At this location, she works as a janitor/floor tech, but she really does a little bit of everything. At her job, Ms. Vick preps, cooks, cleans and performs janitorial duties. She works Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings from 7 to 9 a.m., a total of between six to 10 hours a week.

According to Joyce Bishara, store manager of this Cheddars, Ms. Vicks is a very passionate individual and diligent worker. She loves helping others, Ms. Bishara said.

Concerning her experience with GVRA, Latesha was very satisfied with the treatment she received from the agency. She felt they listened to her concerns and responded to her needs. She would gladly recommend GVRA to anyone with a disability who is seeking employment.



Leading By Example BEP Counselor Nominated to Board

By Administrative Operations Coordinator Charlotte Walker

Business Enterprise Program Valdosta Counselor Thomas Simpson was recently selected to serve as a founding Board Member for Locate South Georgia LEADS. Below is some information provided by the J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership at UGA about what the group hopes to accomplish and promote.

Guided by the belief that leadership is key to a region's economic success, the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and the J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development at the University of Georgia partnered in 2014 to create GeorgiaLEADS. Locate South GeorgiaLEADS is the result of that partnership—and the collaborative efforts by economic development professionals across the 21-county south Georgia region.

This group understands the critical importance of investing in a new generation of leaders to champion the region and its many assets while creating effective solutions to address challenges related to workforce development, education and economic growth throughout the region.

Program graduates completed an eightmonth leadership experience that facilitated awareness of issues essential to the future success of the region. The program linked regional site visits and skills development to leadership content within the framework of the Locate South GeorgiaLEADS priorities: regional identify and influence, workforce development and collective visioning and planning.

The purpose of Locate South GeorgiaLEADS is to develop informed, aware and educated

leaders to promote and grow south Georgia by:

- Increasing awareness of assets and resources;
- Creating a shared sense of regional pride and ownership in both action and solutions;
- Strengthening partnerships and alliances; and
- Enhancing political influence and acuity to support the needs and opportunities of south Georgia.

As a regional leadership development initiative, Locate South GeorgiaLEADS promotes the values of tenacity, diversity, opportunity, prosperity and tradition through the 21-county south Georgia region.

The J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development, a unit of Public Service and Outreach at the University of Georgia, is dedicated to strengthening communities, organizations, and individuals through leadership development, training, and education.

Founded in 1982, the Institute is named for UGA's first Vice President for Services, Dr. J.W. Fanning. His legacy of leadership development is embodied in the Institute's dedication to developing leaders of all ages, in every community, from all walks of life. To learn more, visit their website at www.fanning.uga.edu.

Change your life! Start Your GVRA Referral Today.

Call the GIB Referral Hotline.

1.888.226.3444

Calendar of Events Save the Date

GVRA Leadership Summit

September 17 through September 19 The Westin Savannah Harbor 1 Resort Drive Savannah, GA

ABILITIES EXPO: WICKED AWESOME FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

September 21 through September 23 The Boston Convention & Exhibition Center 415 Summer St. Boston, MA

SILC Gala

September 25 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. The Rooftop Terrace at Atlantic Station 201 17th Street NW Atlanta, GA

GAPSE 2018 Training Conference

October 9 through October 11 UGA Center for Continuing Education & Hotel 1197 South Lumpkin Street Athens, GA

Supported Decision-Making Symposium

November 16 Macon, GA Location TBD



On the Road Again

Cross-State Panel Discussion for #NDEAM2018

GVRA—along with partners from across Georgia—will soon play hosts to a Community Conversations event series. Read on to find out more.

What is the Community Conversations event series?

Community Conversations is a series of panel discussions across the state in honor of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). Each week in October, GVRA and their partners throughout the state will work together to host moderated panel discussions about issues surrounding employment for individuals with disabilities. Panelists will share strategies for securing gainful employment and respond to questions from attendees.

Why is GVRA hosting these events?

GVRA is hosting these events to connect with individuals with disabilities throughout Georgia and to provide information and resources to help them find and maintain meaningful employment. Our goal is to learn more about the unique needs of various communities so that we can better serve Georgians with disabilities.

What's the format of the events?

Community Conversations is an informal, three-hour event focused on facilitating productive discussions about employment challenges facing individuals with disabilities. Each event includes a moderated discussion, networking time and a break with snacks provided.

Is there an event near me?

Four Community Conversations events will be hosted throughout the state of Georgia. We're organizing events in Atlanta, Columbus, Tifton and Savannah. While we are excited to connect directly with each of these communities, we understand that it is out of reach for many Georgians. We will record each event and make videos available on the GVRA website by late 2018.

Can we submit questions for the panel?

Attendees can submit questions for panelists either ahead of time via email or on-site by completing a comment card before the Q&A segment. Please note that all questions will be reviewed and may not be addressed in the event. If you have questions you'd like answered at one of these events, please email Patrice.meadows@gvs.ga.gov.

Who is speaking at the Community Conversations Event Series?

Each Community Conversations event will have a unique panel of individuals from the local community. We are working to include locally-elected officials, employers, individuals with disabilities and community partners from across the state.

Who should attend?

We invite the entire community to participate in the Community Conversations series. We're especially looking forward to learning more from individuals with disabilities, advocates, allies and anyone working to eliminate barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities.



Will there be food?

An assortment of snacks and light food will be available for attendees. We encourage you to register for the Community Conversations event near you to ensure that the appropriate amount of food will be available. If you have questions and/or dietary restrictions, please email Patrice.meadows@gvs.ga.gov.

Where can I register?

You can register for the Community Conversation near you by visiting our website, www.gvs.ga.gov. You'll see each of our four locations listed on our events page. Complete the brief registration form to reserve your spot.

Back to School GRA Donates School Supplies

By Team Lead Frenchye Mike

Alfred Ely Beach High School is one of the oldest public high schools in Savannah, Georgia. In 1867, the Beach Institute was established by the Freedmen's Bureau with funds donated by Alfred Ely Beach, editor of Scientific American. By 1874, the institute was appropriated by the Savannah-Chatham Board of Education for the purpose of providing free education to Savannah's African American citizenry.

In 2017 Alfred Ely Beach High School celebrated its 150th Anniversary. The longstanding history of BHS still resonates with its students today; presently, Beach High School is open to residents of Chatham County grades 9-12. As a means to ensure all students are prepared for learning and equipped with the tools for success, the Georgia Rehabilitation Association (GRA) found it necessary to donate school supplies this year.

Pictured below: (seated from left) GVRA Career Specialist for Transition Jacqueline Lasseter, GVRA Team Lead Frenchye Mike, (standing from left) School Counselor Dr. Douglas Simmons, Parent Involvement Facilitator Shaniqua McIver, and Assistant Principal Marlon Worrill





In Memoriam Remembering Dr. Beatrice White

By CRC Dru Fentem



The field of Vocational Rehabilitation has lost another cornerstone. Dr. Beatrice Wright, author of "Physical Disability – A Psychosocial

Approach" passed away at the age of 100, on July 31, 2018.

During WWII, Dr. Wright worked for the United States Employment Service, where she was tasked with administering the Stanford Binet Intelligence Scales, then finding employment for persons with intellectual disabilities. This experience launched a career of developing appropriate and culturally responsive ways to work with individuals with disabilities, at a time when our culture was biased against them.

Her book, co-authored with Dr. Roger Barker, "Adjustment to Physical Handicap and Illness: A survey of the Social Psychology of Physique and Disability" was considered a landmark publication in the field of psychology.

"Physical Disability – A Psychosocial Approach" was first published in 1960, and updated in 1983, and was used as a textbook in most Rehabilitation Counseling Education programs.

Dr. Wright's work was influential in the development of several government acts, including the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as well as the Americans and Disabilities Act of 1990. She lectured well into her 90's, and

continued to be a strong advocate for rehabilitation and disability rights. Anyone who had the pleasure of hearing her speak will never forget the experience! In 2009, Dr. Wright received the Kurt Lewin Award from the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues.

In recognition of her important contributions to psychological research for social change.

Beatrice Posner married M.Erik Wright (M.D., Ph.D.) when they were graduate students in 1940. Until his death in 1981, he remained her sweetheart, colleague, and closest companion. Beatrice, as a parent, placed a high value on intellectual pursuits and was a very enthusiastic supporter of the projects and creativity of their three children, Colleen S.W. Rand, Erik O. Wright, and Woodring E. Wright. All three children profited immensely from her support and love. Beatrice is survived by her children, 7 grandchildren, and 14 greatgrandchildren. She will be buried next to her husband in Lawrence, Kansas.

Memorial donations may be made to KU Endowment in support of the Beatrice A. Wright Faculty Scholarship in Health and Rehabilitation Fund. Send donations to KU Endowment, P.O. Box 928, Lawrence, KS 66044 or give online at www.kuendowment.org/

She will be missed.



Always Be Prepared Staff Attends Mental Health Training

By Behavioral Health Coordinator Sharon De Mille

GVRA staff recently participated in a mental health first aid training course.

This eight-hour curriculum, developed by the National Alliance for Mental Illness, is intended to help train persons to help a person developing a mental health problem, experiencing a worsening of an existing mental health problem, or a person in mental health crisis. Through partnership with Alliant, who received a grant for this training, we have been able to offer this opportunity to GVRA staff. Per grant

guidelines, there can only be 5 trainings, of 30 persons each, per agency but they have applied for a new grant so we hope to repeat this offer next year.

All the sessions are full and the feedback so far has been positive: "Information was awesome and so helpful," "I expected to learn basic information about types of diagnoses, but I learned so much more."



Instructor Holly Pounds (left) leads staff in an activity designed to demonstrate how disabling Behavioral Health diagnoses can be compared to commonly known physical conditions.



All Aboard GVRS, SRC Convene at GRA



Both the State Rehabilitation Council and the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services board held sessions at this year's Georgia Rehabilitation Association conference in Savannah recently. Above, SRC members discuss topics related to employment of people with disabilities. Below, GVRS Board Chairman Emeritus Jimmy DeFoor is presented with a commendation from Governor Nathan Deal by Chairman Tom Wilson establishing Jimmy's new title. The presentation was done at a GVRS training session.



Hakuna Matata On the Power of Positivity

By Team Lead Lisa Sipp

Gabriel Miles is a success story like none other. He began his time with the Macon VR unit In 2017.

By that time, he had experienced many hardships already. Before he began with GVRA, he endured and overcame homelessness and an arrest that placed him in the Regional Youth Detention Center. Based on these barriers, he could have easily quit attending classes at Northeast High School in Macon. But he paid it forward by speaking with underclassmen and encouraging them about having the right priorities, setting goals, good life strategies and receiving support from positive people.

Gabriel had a village who continuously encouraged him to keep moving forward in spite of his difficulties. His mother encouraged him to stay in school, and his Assistant Principle, Kenneth Lanier, took this young man under his wing.

Every morning, Mr. Lanier went out of his way and picked Gabriel up from wherever he had to stay the night before to take him to school. "Miles, Miles, Miles" is what Gabriel remembers Mr. Lanier saying each time he made a not-so-wise decision. But Lanier never gave up encouraging this young man.

When asked how GVRA contributed to his story, Gabrielle said that attending the Spring Leadership Conference in 2018 allowed him to see that while others might see people with disabilities as not being intelligent or able to accomplish anything, they can in fact accomplish anything they set their mind to. Gabriel earned third place in the Horticulture competition at the

conference.

In April 2018, his story was featured on the local news where it caught the eye of a representative of Cox Communications. Because of that, he was awarded the Cox Inspirational Student Hero Award.

May 22 of this year was formally recognized by the city of Macon as Gabriel Miles Day, and he received a proclamation noting as such from the City Council of Macon-Bibb County.

Gabriel has two quotes that he says help him to focus: One is "Hakuna Matata- No worries for the rest of your days" from Disney's The Lion King. He says that he can't be worried about his past since his future is so bright. The second quote is "Never quit, never back down" from WWE wrestler John Cena. This quote is important to him because he said that he never will quit and will always move forward.

On May 26, Gabriel did something no one in his family ever has—he graduated from high school. He has since been accepted to Central Georgia Technical College and will begin classes shortly, majoring in in Design and Media Production Technology with hopes to work in the television industry one day.

So stay tuned because this young man's success story has just begun!

GRA 2018

Pictures from the Annual Conference









Thank You

As always, I want to thank everyone who contributed to this month's issue of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency newsletter. This newsletter wouldn't be possible without the hard work of so many different people working in so many different positions within the organization.

We rely on those who are more client facing to let us know about the good work they're

By Communications Manager John Boan

doing every day, and the stories in each month's newsletter are testament to their hard work and dedication to helping individuals with disabilities find real and meaningful employment.

That's why we do what we do. That's what it's all about.

Winner's Circle This Year's GRA Award Winners

Every year, the Georgia Rehabilitation Association honors some of the best and brightest in the field of vocational rehabilitation. Below are this year's winners.

Nancy Crowder Scholarship Awards
Breanna Stripling and Robert "Trey" Quinn,
III

Employer of the Year Holiday Inn Express & Suites, Helen, GA

Service Award Dr. Donna Andrews

Personal Achievement Award Nicholas Welch

Counseling Achievement Award Debbie Howard, Cleveland VR Office Chapter of the Year South Division of the Year GAMRC

Janice Black Spirit Award Keita Alston

GARL Continuing Education Grant
Dana Skelton-Sanders & Debbie Howard

GARL J. Ellies Moran Outstanding Leadership Award Kevin Harris

ARTS Boss of the Year Beth Williams

Congratulations to all the winners!

www.gvs.ga.gov



